

Thunderbolt 7 Signing Out

by CSM William J. Gainey, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Armor Center

Hello from the Home of Cavalry and Armor, good ole' Fort Knox, Kentucky. Our soldiers and noncommissioned officers are training hard and doing great things.

This will be my last article from the "Driver's Seat," as the United States Army Armor Center and Fort Knox Command Sergeant Major. I am honored to have been selected by Lieutenant General Thomas Metz to be the next III Corps and Fort Hood Command Sergeant Major, and look forward to working with LTG Metz and serving the great soldiers, families, and civilians of Fort Hood.

For my last article, I would like to take a little time to reflect on what we as a force have accomplished together during the past year. As a team, we have improved our ability to communicate with each of the 10 divisions and two regiments of the Active Army, and have created a great relationship with our National Guard and Army Reserve Armor Components. We have worked closely with each division command sergeant major to ensure that input from the field was getting directly to the Chief of Armor. The input received has allowed us to make decisions that we think (thanks to you) will guide the Armor Force in the right direction.

When I first became the Armor Center Command Sergeant Major (CSM), I had a list of five things I wanted my team to do during the first year. I would like to share them with you and report on the status of each mission:

- First: Visit the 10 divisions, two regiments, and as many National Guard and Army Reserve armor units as possible. We get a "C" on this task. While we did visit most of the divisions and one of the regiments, we did not get to visit our Germany-based units and a couple in the states. They were on our radar screen but with the world situation and their very fast training cycle, we were unable to visit them. We did develop a force-wide positive working relationship with all the division command sergeants major.

- Second: Develop a proactive relationship with all of the good folks at the Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM),

mainly those working in the Hoffman Building. We get an "A" on this task. To help these great folks fully understand how important they are to armor soldiers, we invited their team to Fort Knox to visit and take part in some of our training. Our goal was to give them a greater appreciation not only for what our young soldiers go through, but to make them understand how important they are to us. I would encourage you to call your branch representative and just thank them for what they do for you and not just call when you have a complaint.

- Third: Get more command sergeants major involved in the Armor Conference and make it more user-friendly. They now play a big role in the topics discussed during the Armor Center Sergeant Major's Update. We also now invite all battalion command sergeants major and above by personal invitation to the Armor Conference. This includes all Armor Active, National Guard, and Army Reservists. We get a "B" on this task because I know in my heart that we missed a few. I would encourage anyone that did not get an invitation to e-mail me and we will put you on the list.

- Fourth: Improve promotion board guidance packets for soldiers we send from Fort Knox to promotion boards. While it has been outstanding in the past, I wanted my team to look for ways to better communicate exactly what type of leader the Armor Force is looking for when it comes to promotions to sergeant first class, master sergeant, and sergeant major. I am very proud of the work done by SGM Rollie Russell and his crew. We now have a simple, very understandable guidance packet for the board members to review. Our team gets an "A" on this task.

- Fifth: Improve the standards at Fort Knox. As the Armor Center and Fort Knox CSM, I realized that I wear two hats, one as the Regimental CSM for the Armor Force and the other as the Post CSM for Fort Knox. I believe that before you can say a word about the standards of another installation, you better have your own house in order. We started reviewing the post policies and realized that a few were not enforced, so we start-



ed holding leaders, soldiers, families, and civilians responsible for their actions. Our goal is to make Fort Knox a safe, healthy, secure, and enjoyable community in which to live. Since this is a never-ending task, we get a "B" in this area.

As you can see, Fort Knox has indeed been a busy place over the past year. We have accomplished a lot of good things, but we could not have done any of these things without the leaders, soldiers, families, and civilians that work and play at Fort Knox. You all make this old soldier enjoy coming to work each day.

As we all know, our military is deeply involved with trying to make this world a better place in which to live. The young men and women of our Armed Forces are doing an outstanding job in this task. Please be sure to thank a soldier for what they are doing on a daily basis because our enlisted soldiers are the end connectors that hold our track together.

In closing, I would like to share a quote that was passed on to me approximately 25 years ago. I make a point of sharing this with soldiers at every opportunity:

*You have never lived,
until you have almost died.
For those of us who have had to deploy
or fight for it,
Freedom has a special favor;
The protected will never know.*

Again, it has been an honor to serve as the Regimental CSM for the Armor Force and I want each of you to remember that "**PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS**," so get out and infect other soldiers with it.

"Thunderbolt 7, out."